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TAGS: MOPS NATO PARM PGOV PREL MK

SUBJECT: NATO'S POSITIVE REACTION TO MACEDONIA'S ANNUAL
NATIONAL PROGRAM

REF: SECSTATE 168277

Classified By: DCM Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The NATO Senior Political Committee/Reinforced (SPC/R) met with a Macedonian (MK) delegation on October 6 to discuss the way ahead for Macedonia's eighth Membership Action Plan (MAP) cycle. The Macedonian delegation presented details of their Annual National Program (ANP) for 2006-2007, highlighting the success of their most recent elections and emphasizing the will of the new government to continue the successes of the previous administration in the areas of regional cooperation, contributions to NATO operations, and critical domestic reforms. MK asked that a clear message of encouragement and timeframe for membership be offered to each individual NATO aspirant in the communique of the November 2006 NATO Summit at Riga. The overall atmosphere of the session was positive with the majority of NATO Allies praising Macedonia's ANP, the high level of public support for NATO membership in Macedonia, its stabilizing regional role, its operational military involvement outside the region, as well as its defense reforms. Concerns expressed focused on judicial and police reforms, organized crime, corruption and equitable ethnic representation in the military. Allies gave various responses regarding the Riga communique, with some advocating no timeline and emphasizing a performance-based decision and others calling for a timeline and roadmap. END SUMMARY.

MACEDONIAN PRESENTATION

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¶2. (C) A Macedonian delegation led by Ambassador Nikola Dmitrov, National Coordinator for NATO Integration, and augmented by Mrs. Ljiljana Sterijovska, State Secretary, MOD, presented Macedonia's 2006-2007 ANP to the NATO SPC/R on October 6. Ambassador Dmitrov stated that Macedonia had proven its political maturity through this summer's parliamentary elections. Though sporadic disruptive incidents took place, Macedonia was addressing them through the rule of law with 13 criminal indictments filed. Dmitrov said the new MK government sought to continue past successes by generating stability at home and abroad. The government

would strengthen multi-ethnic relations using the pillars of equitable representation and decentralization. Macedonia would continue to take part in all regional initiatives, particularly those with the Adriatic-3 (Albania, Croatia and Macedonia), and would continue to contribute beyond the region with MK's participation in ISAF in Afghanistan (Joint Med Team, HQ SEEBRIG, etc.). Dmitrov informed the committee that Macedonia's new MOD is considering revising (reducing or withdrawing) the caveats for its troops in ISAF.

¶3. (C) On domestic issues, Dmitrov specifically focused on judicial reform, the economy and the Law on Police. He stated that new legislation on judicial reform was already producing improvement, with the backlog of cases slowly decreasing. The economy, he said, was not progressing well so the government would be focusing on reviving growth and attracting investors. The Law on Police was important not only for the domestic agenda, but also for the nation's NATO aspirations. The draft law was currently in Parliament and the subject of heated debate. Dmitrov predicted the law would be adopted by the end of October. Regarding NATO's upcoming November Summit in Riga, Dmitrov said the communique should include a segment on the individual progress of each candidate country, an announcement that 2008 would be an "enlargement year," and a timeframe for issuing membership invitations.

¶4. (C) Sterijovska spoke on behalf of the MOD, stating that defense reforms were in the final stages of implementation. She highlighted progress in achieving greater equitable ethnic representation in the Armed Forces, the adoption of the Defense and Military Service Laws (ensuring the professionalization of the military), and advances in training (both in the Officer and NCO Corps). She noted that

the professionalization of the Macedonian Armed Forces (ARM) would be completed a year earlier than planned.

ALLIED REACTION

¶5. (C) The overall atmosphere of the session was positive with interventions from 17 Allies. The majority of NATO nations expressed their support for Macedonia's NATO aspirations and emphasized that membership is performance-driven. Comments concerning the Annual National Program were also encouraging, although Romania noted it would have preferred more information on areas where MK still needs assistance. Slovenia stated it saw significant progress from MK's 2005-2006 ANP.

POLITICAL ISSUES

¶6. (C) Praise came from around the table on Macedonia's continued high level of public support for NATO membership (close to 90 percent). The Netherlands and Hungary stressed the importance of the new government continuing the reform efforts of the previous administration. Macedonia was also encouraged by Allies (UK, GR, IC, NL, US) to pass the Law on Police, as well as to persist in reforms in the areas of judiciary, organized crime and corruption and strengthening the rule of law (GR, RO, IC, NL, US). Positive comments were shared with MK regarding their contributions to stability in the Balkans region (RO, FR, NO, HU, SP, PL).

RIGA LANGUAGE

¶7. (C) Allied comments regarding enlargement language for the Riga communique were diverse. The U.S. said that decisions on membership invitations should be based on performance and not by any timeline. Germany stated that MK could expect to get a positive signal, but that an invitation was performance, not event, driven. Both Bulgaria and Hungary said NATO needed to go beyond repeating "the door is open" and provide the aspirants a clear message which included individual assessments. Norway was the most

far-reaching of the group, stating they would like to see a concrete timeline with a roadmap provided to the MAP nations, though they also said that performance remains the key.

DEFENSE ISSUES

18. (C) The majority of Allies noted Macedonia's outstanding progress in defense reforms. Norway and Poland praised the realism in Macedonia's defense planning while Slovenia stated that MK's firm defense plans showed their commitment to further progress. Other comments from Allies emphasized Skopje's role as a security provider and acknowledged the ARM was headed towards becoming a much leaner force. All NATO nations thanked Macedonia for their contribution to operations, acknowledging that ARM forces were becoming more interoperable with NATO forces. MK's efforts to achieve equitable ethnic representation in the MOD and Army were also addressed with some Allies reinforcing the importance of these efforts (US, GM and FR) and others noting they were making good progress (TU, UK, PL). Both France and Germany emphasized that the issue of equality for minorities needed to be implemented across the entire public sector at all levels, not just in the military.

MACEDONIA RESPONDS

19. (C) Ambassador Dmitrov stated that all efforts would be made during the next elections to prevent the repetition of any disruptive incidents. He noted, however, that the incidents which occurred during the July 2006 elections were very isolated events and as such would be difficult to completely prevent in the future. The Ambassador spoke to

the current political situation in the country, noting that even though the PM made great efforts to include the two largest ethnic Albanian political parties in the government, even intense negotiations failed at first due to a high level of animosity between the parties. Only now, after much effort, is progress being made and Dmitrov believed politics would no longer delay governmental progress. The Ambassador went on to say that NATO membership had become so important to MK's leadership that the PM had appointed a National NATO Coordinator, reporting directly to the PM on all NATO matters. On the defense side, Sterijovska addressed Air Sovereignty and noted the MoD has developed a three-phased plan, with the first phase (already funded) being the establishment of an Air Surveillance Operations Center to provide a shared radar picture with the region and NATO. The second and third phases, procuring modern radars and establishing an air policing capability, had not yet been funded. In response to a question concerning military units being declared for both NATO and EU use, Sterijovska stated that most units belong to the same pool of forces. Therefore, if participation was required for both organizations, a political decision would determine where to deploy the units.